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(54) Abstract Title
An entertainment machine

(57)   An entertainment machine 1 arranged to be played by at least one user and to provide a game of strategy in which the user makes at least one move comprises a display 4, processing circuitry 22 to provide the game and display it on said display 4, and at least one user operable input 6, 8, 10 to the processing circuitry 22. The processing circuitry 22 enters a selection routine before a user can make a move in predetermined situations in the game, such that the outcome of the selection routine can be used to determine the next move in the game. The selection routine may require a user to predict the outcome of a HI/LO game or a roll of at least one dice. In an alternative embodiment the invention comprises a network of two or more entertainment machines. The game of strategy may include games such as connect4, othello, chinese checkers, noughts and crosses, card games requiring skill, patience, draughts, chess, pairs. In a further embodiment a computer readable medium has stored thereon instructions for causing an entertainment machine to function as claimed in claim 1-25. In another embodiment a propagated signal is arranged to program a processing circuitry to execute the method of any of claims 26-34.
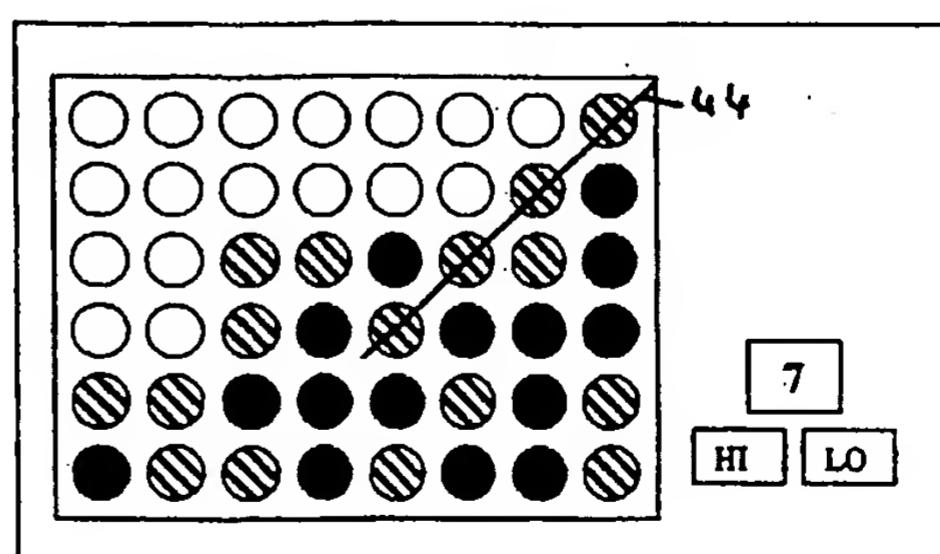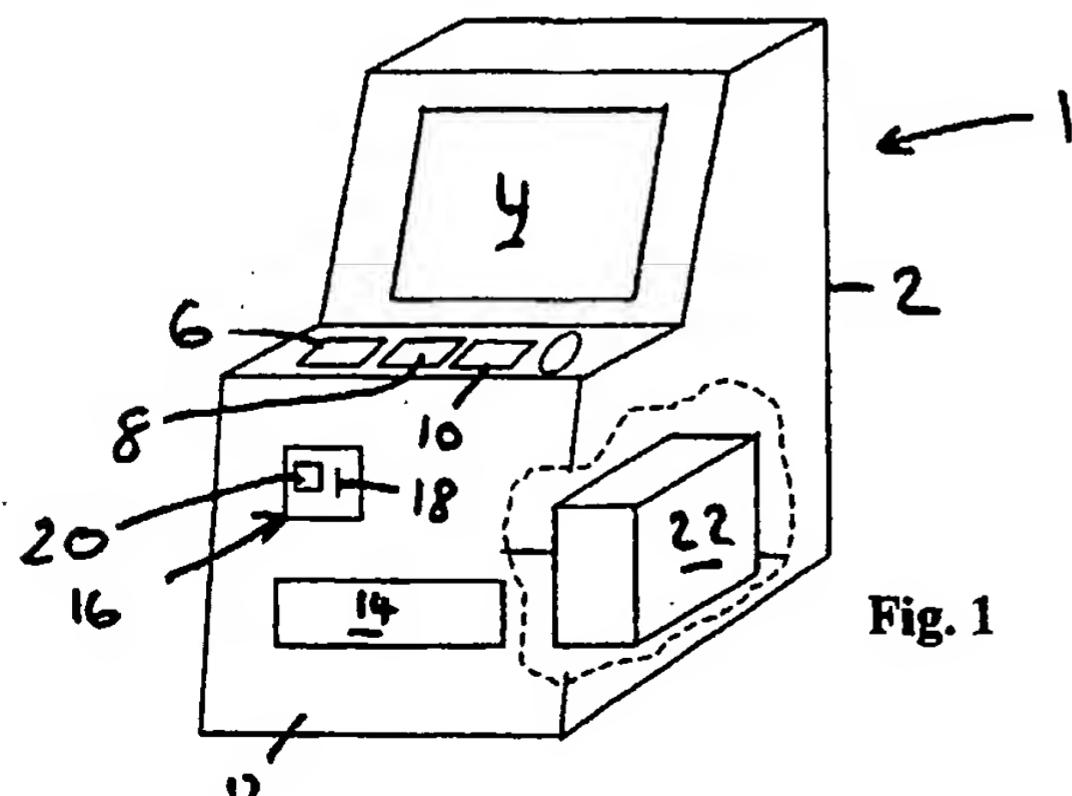

Fig. 1

Fig.6

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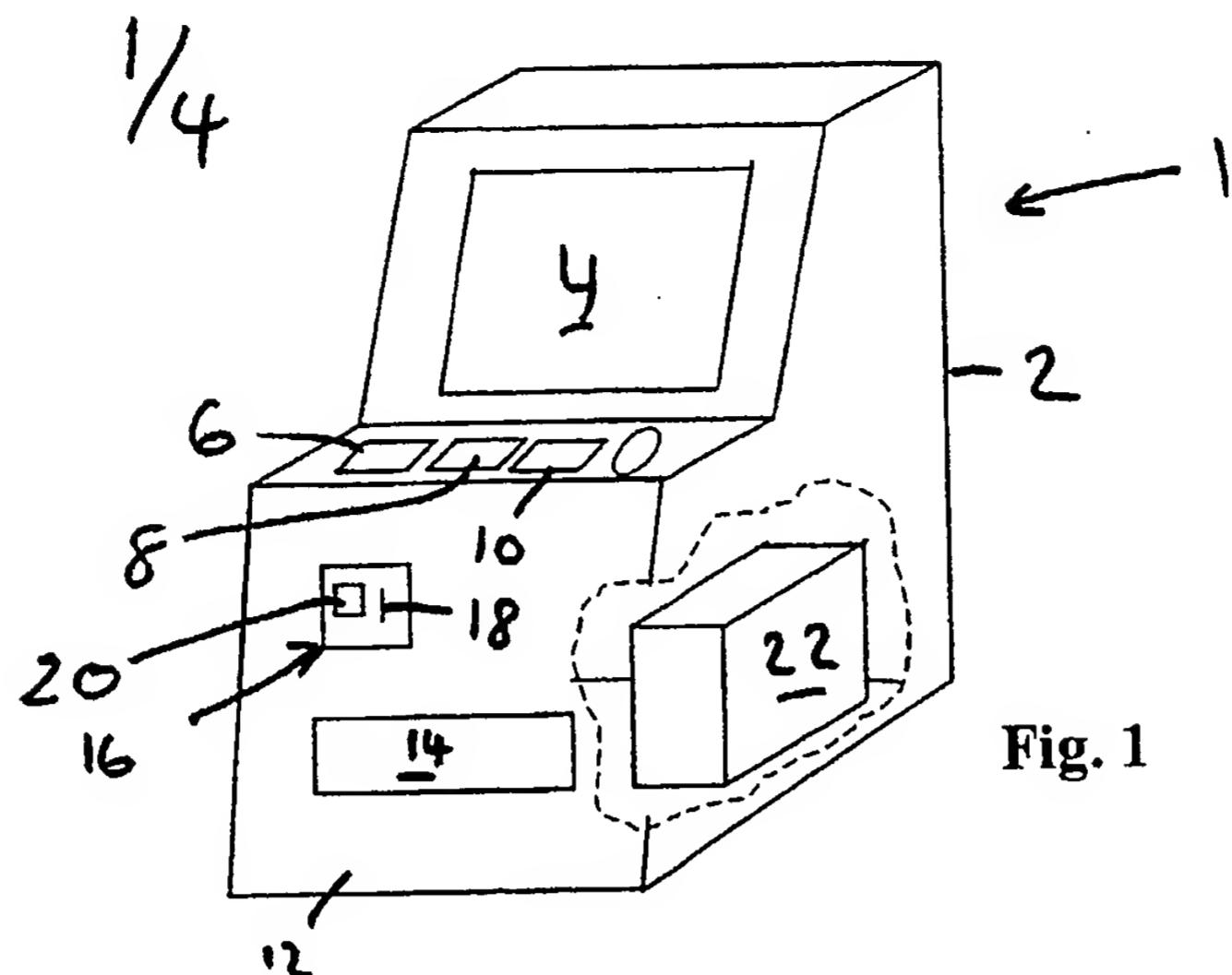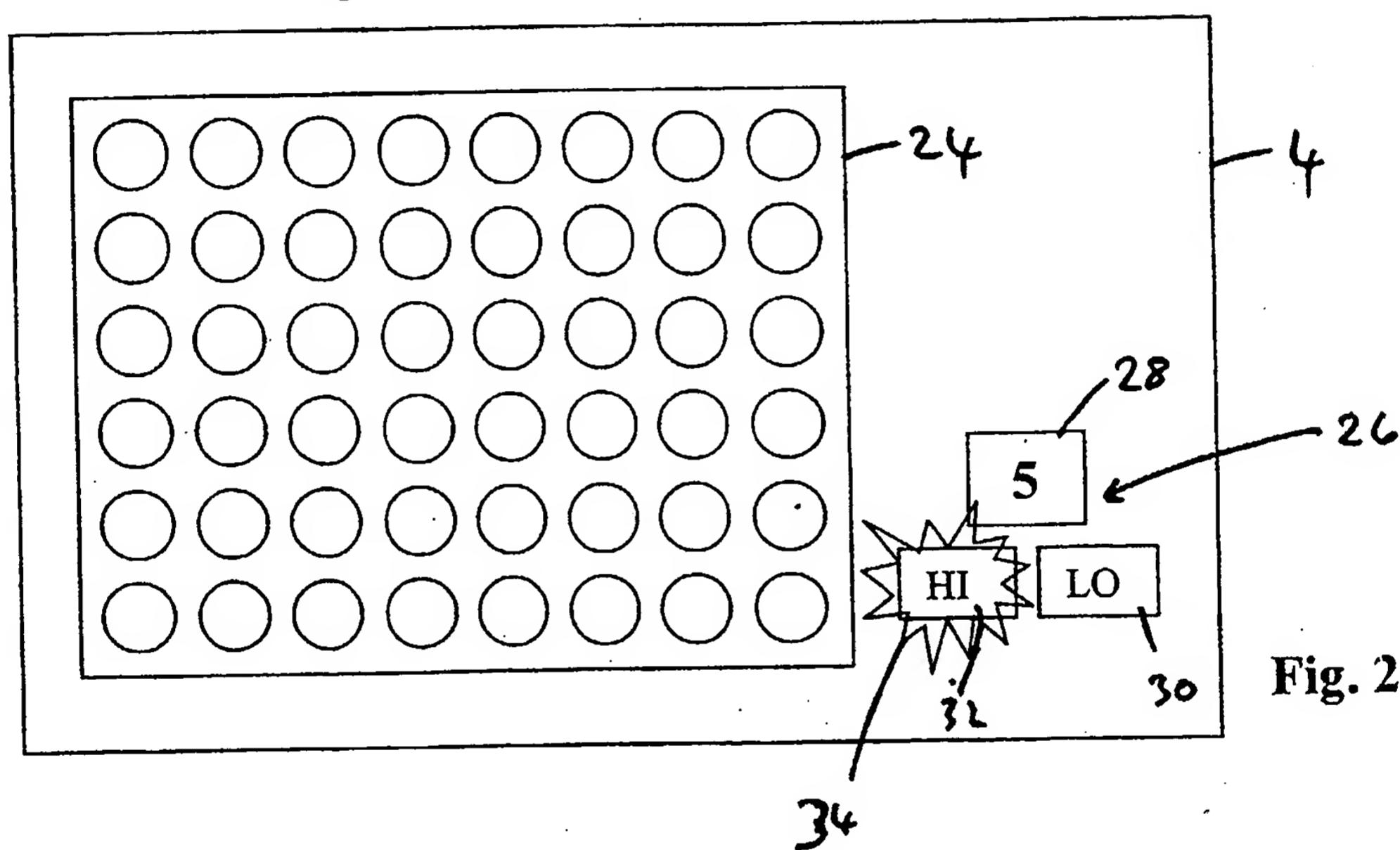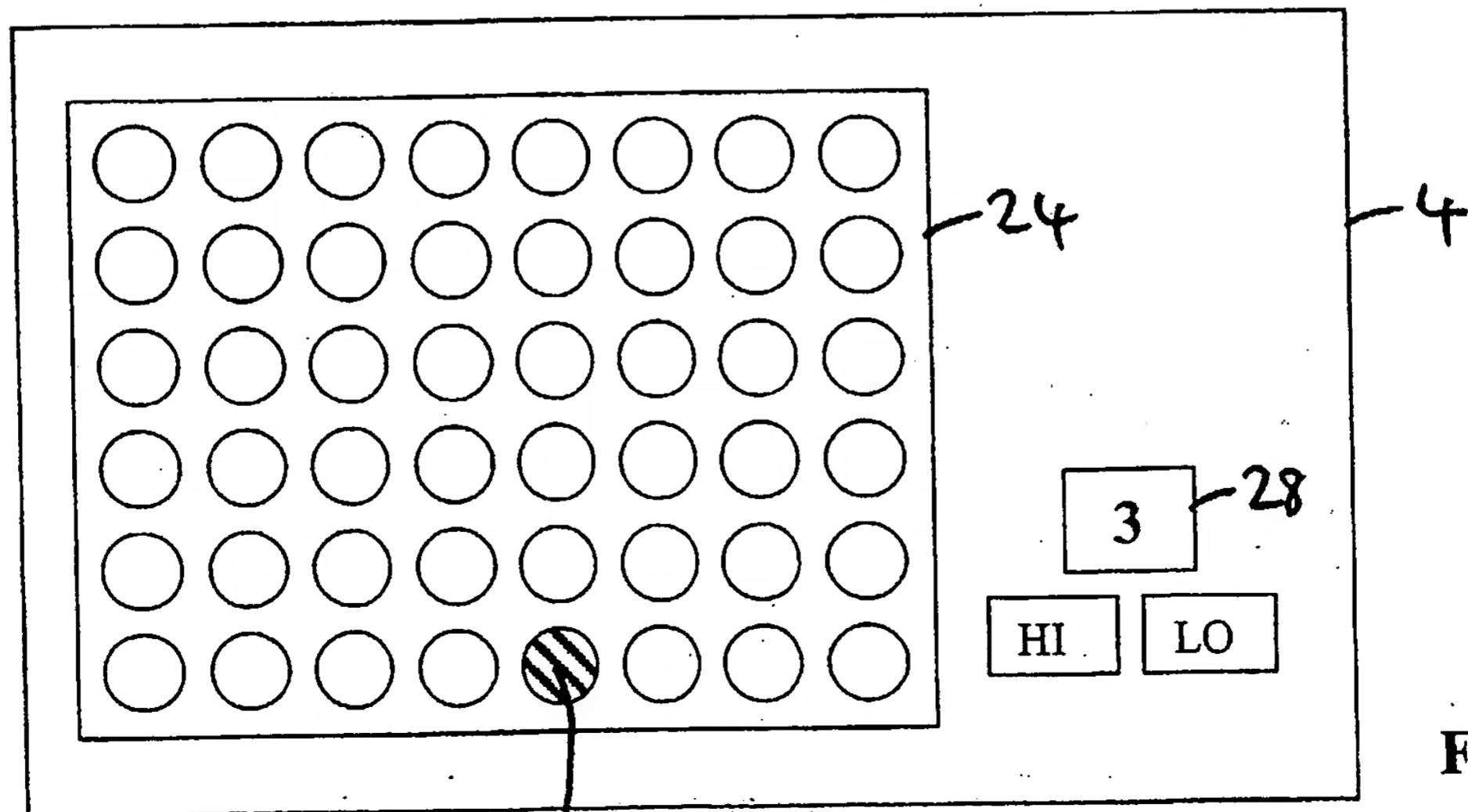
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig.4

Fig.5

Fig.6

46

4

48

50

P1   P2

28

7 28

52

HI   LO   HI   LO

32   30   32   30

Fig 7

4

48

P1   P2

1 28

8

HI   LO   HI   LO

54 32

Fig 8

X

X

X

P1   P2

5 28

8

HI   LO   HI   LO

Fig 9

O ← 46

P1   P2

| 5 | | 4 | 28 |

HI   LO   HI   LO

Fig 10

1

2   2

6   6
8   8
10   10
23   23
20   20
18   18
16   16
14   14
22   22
12   12
25   23
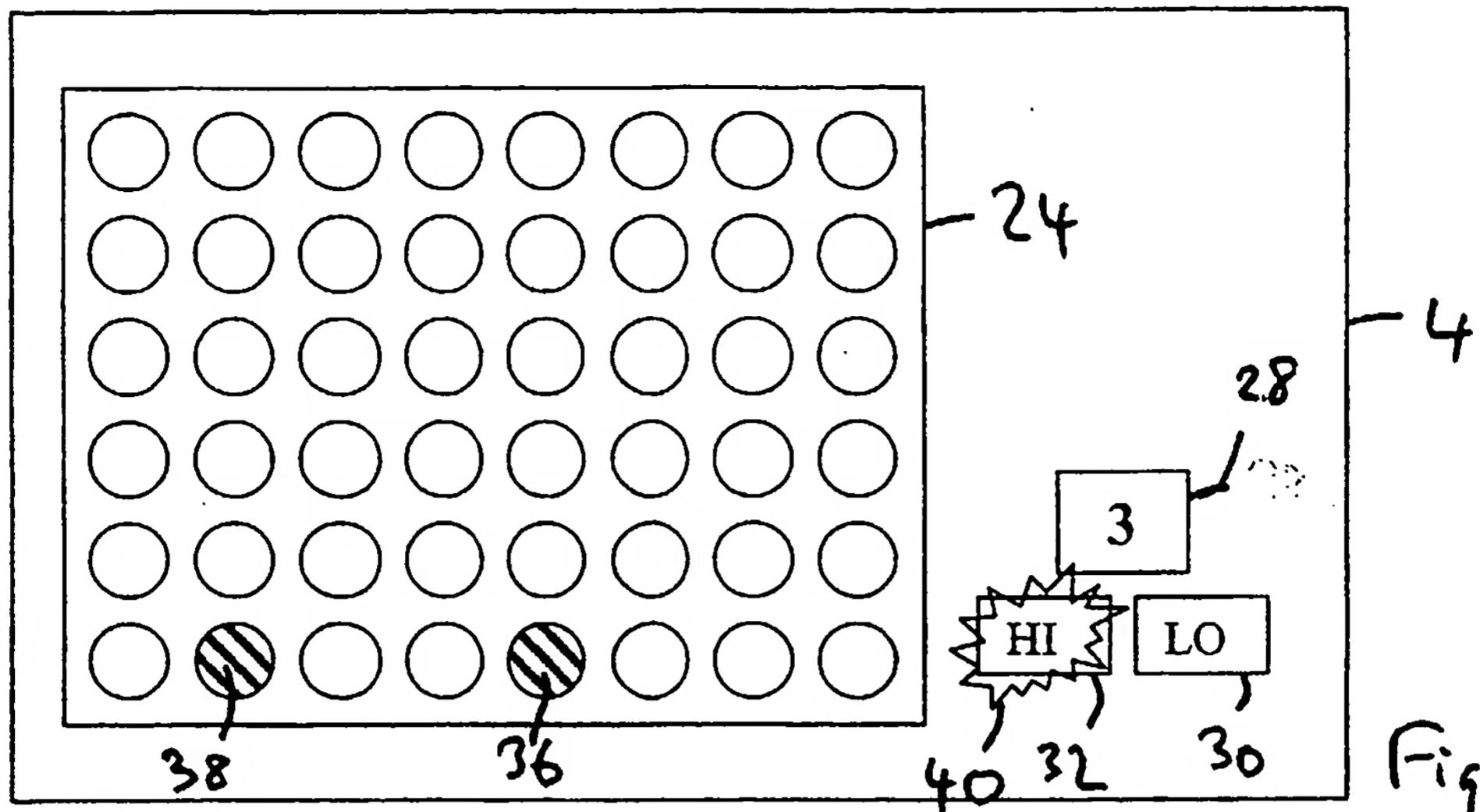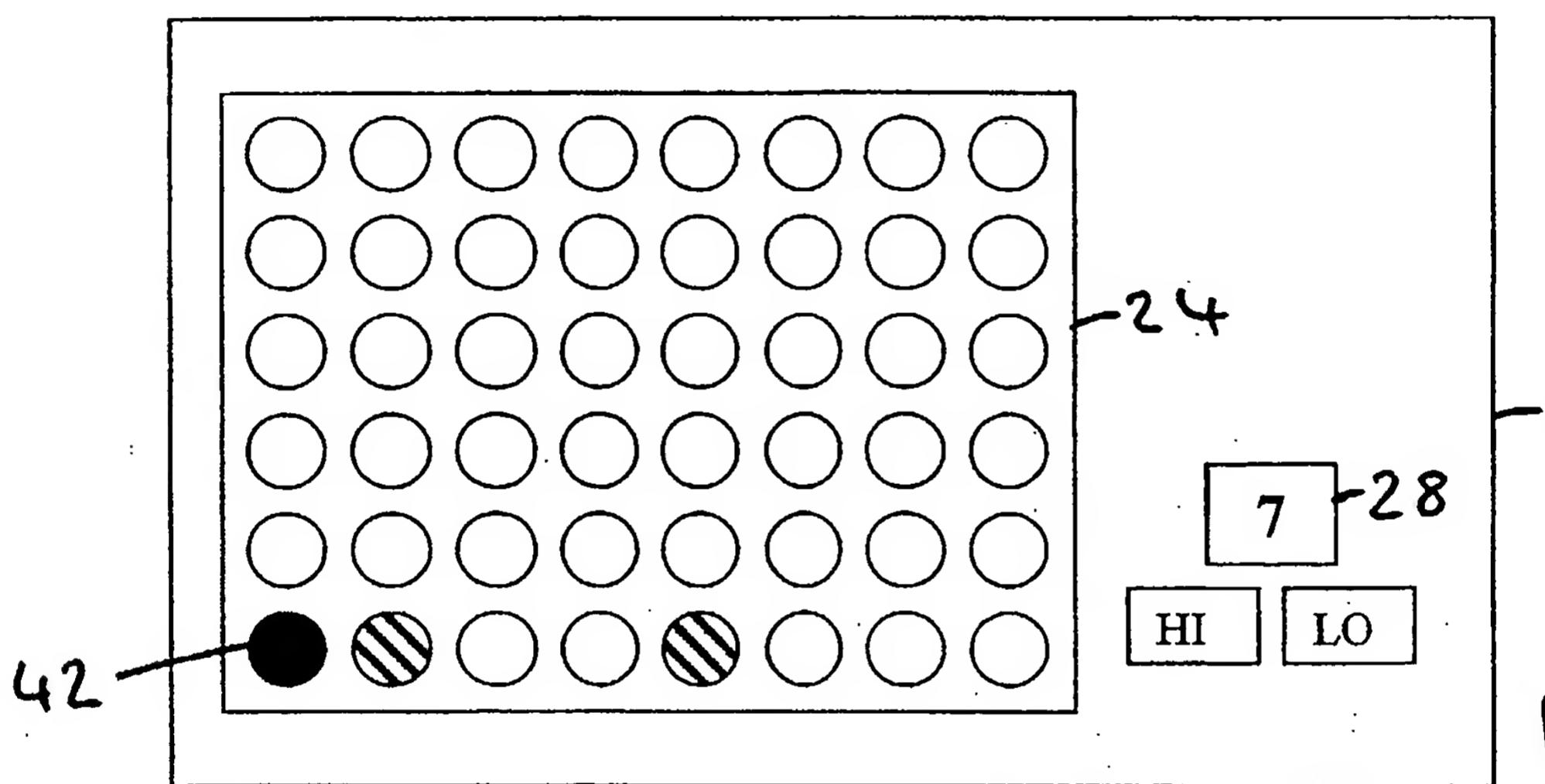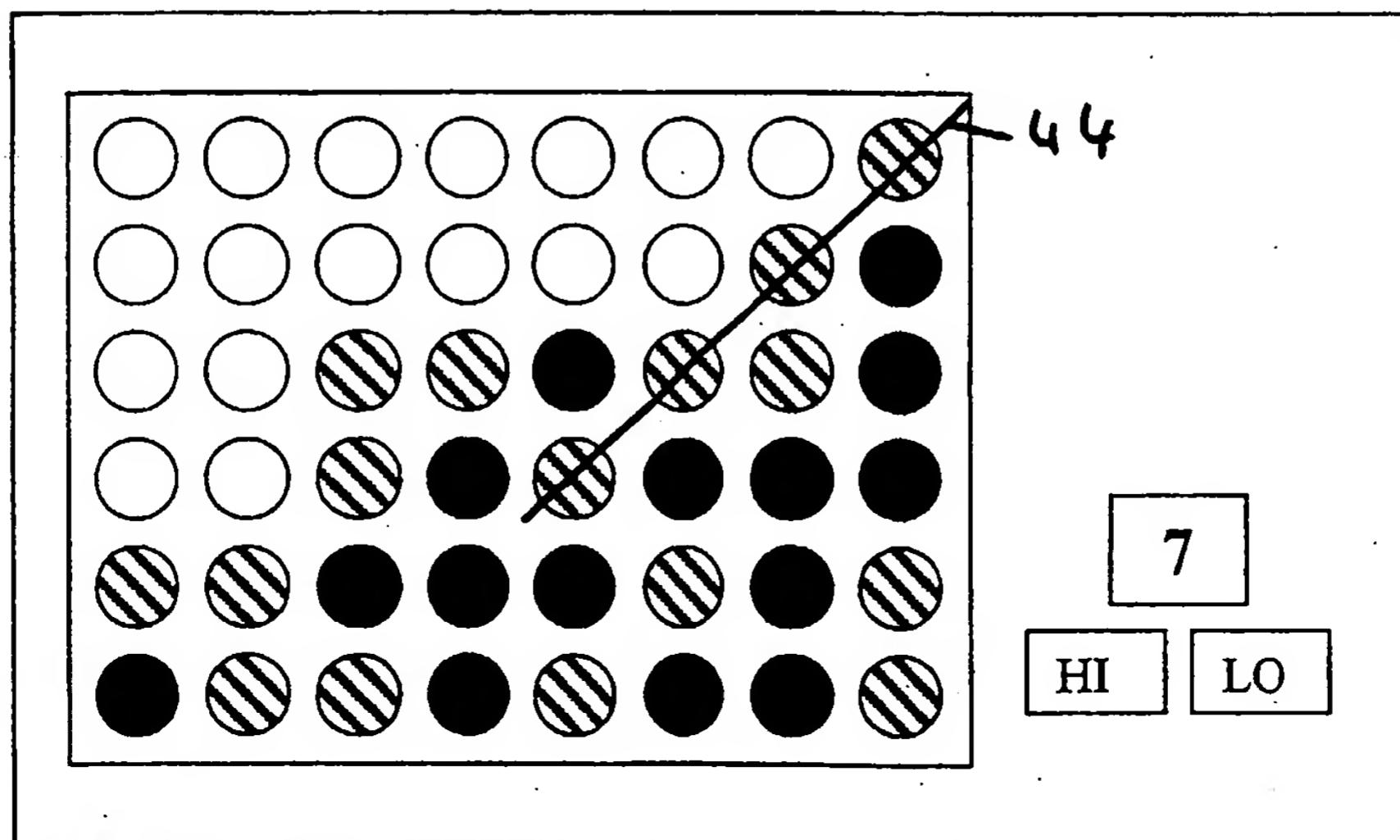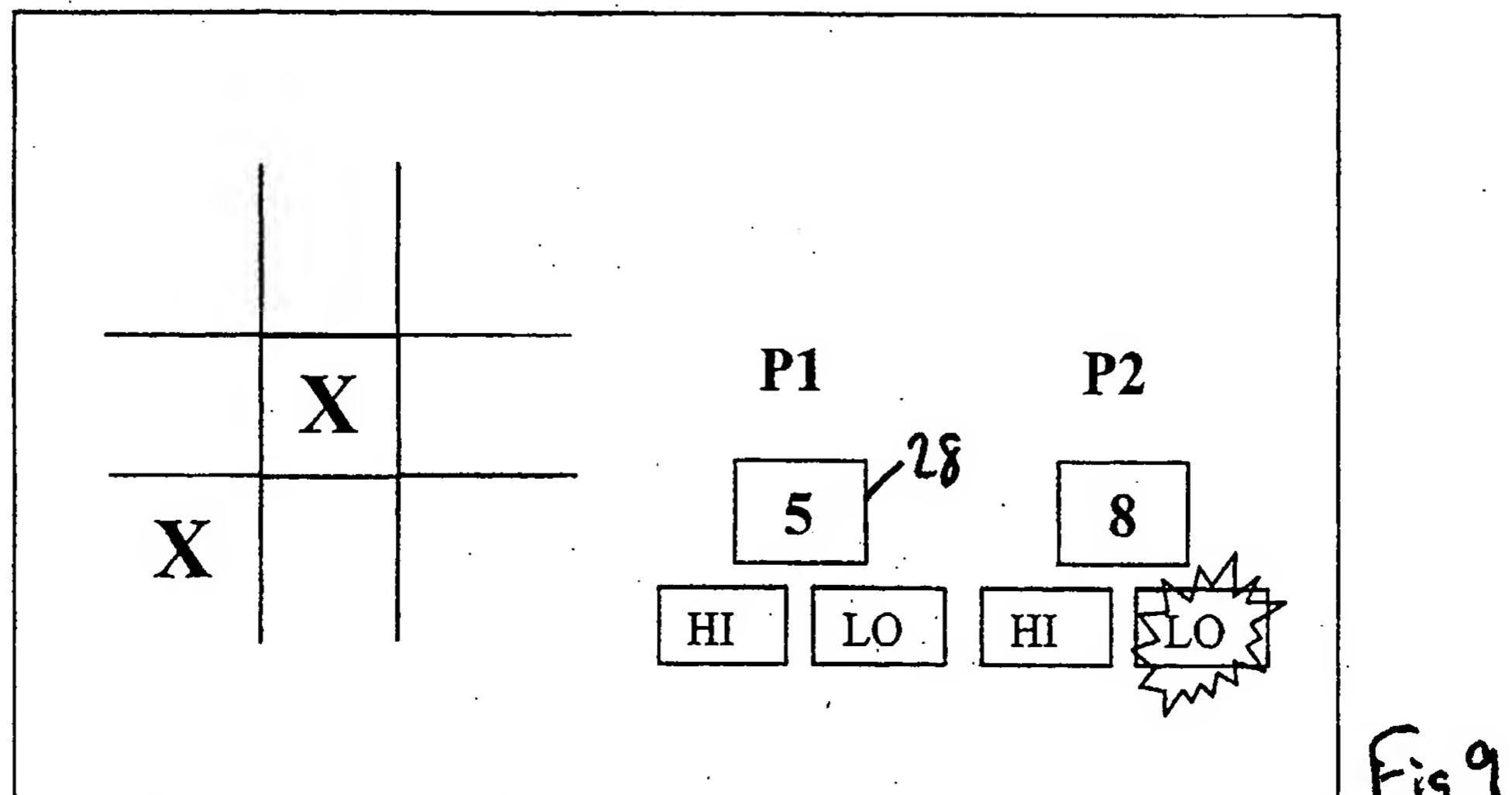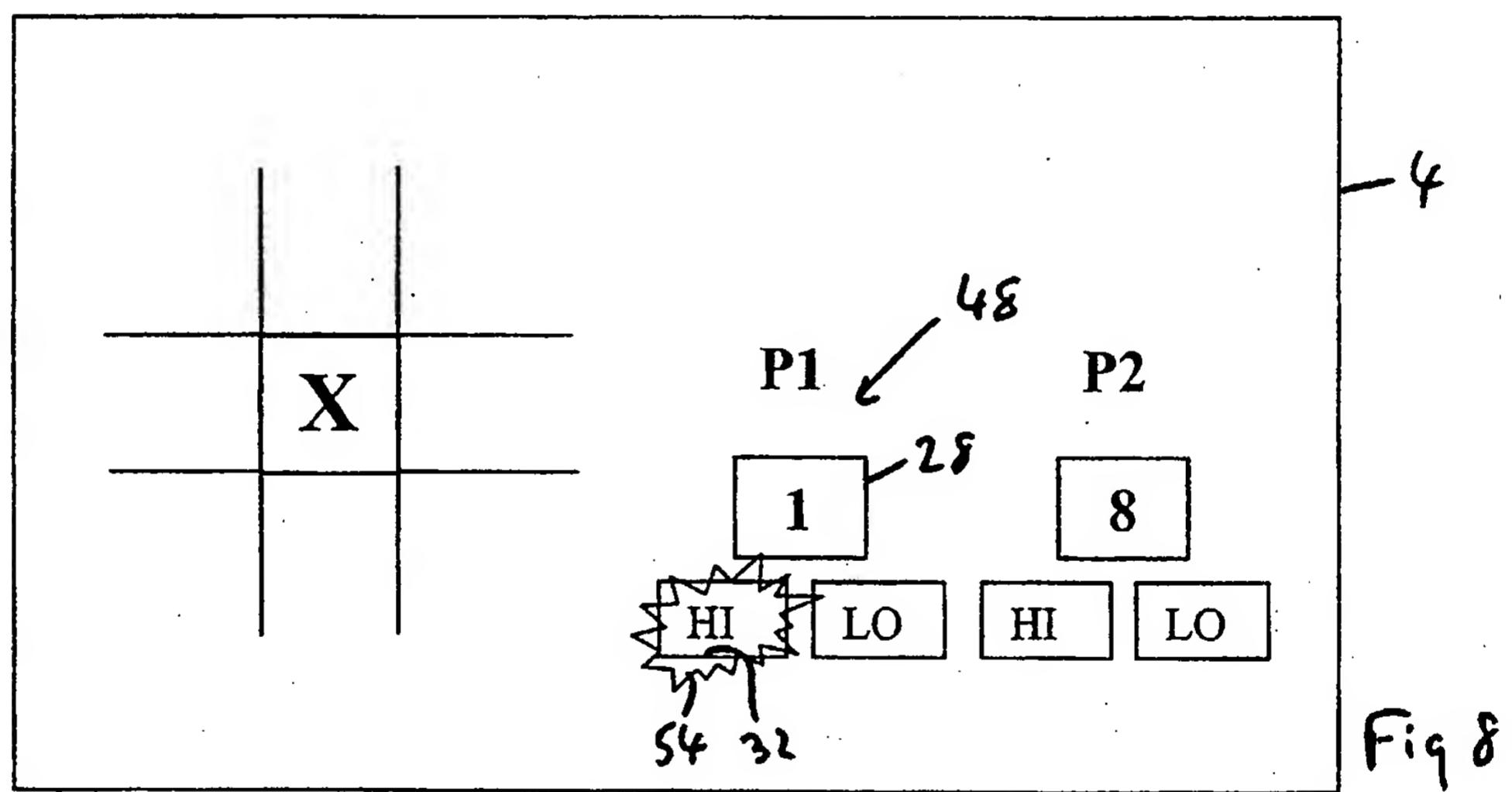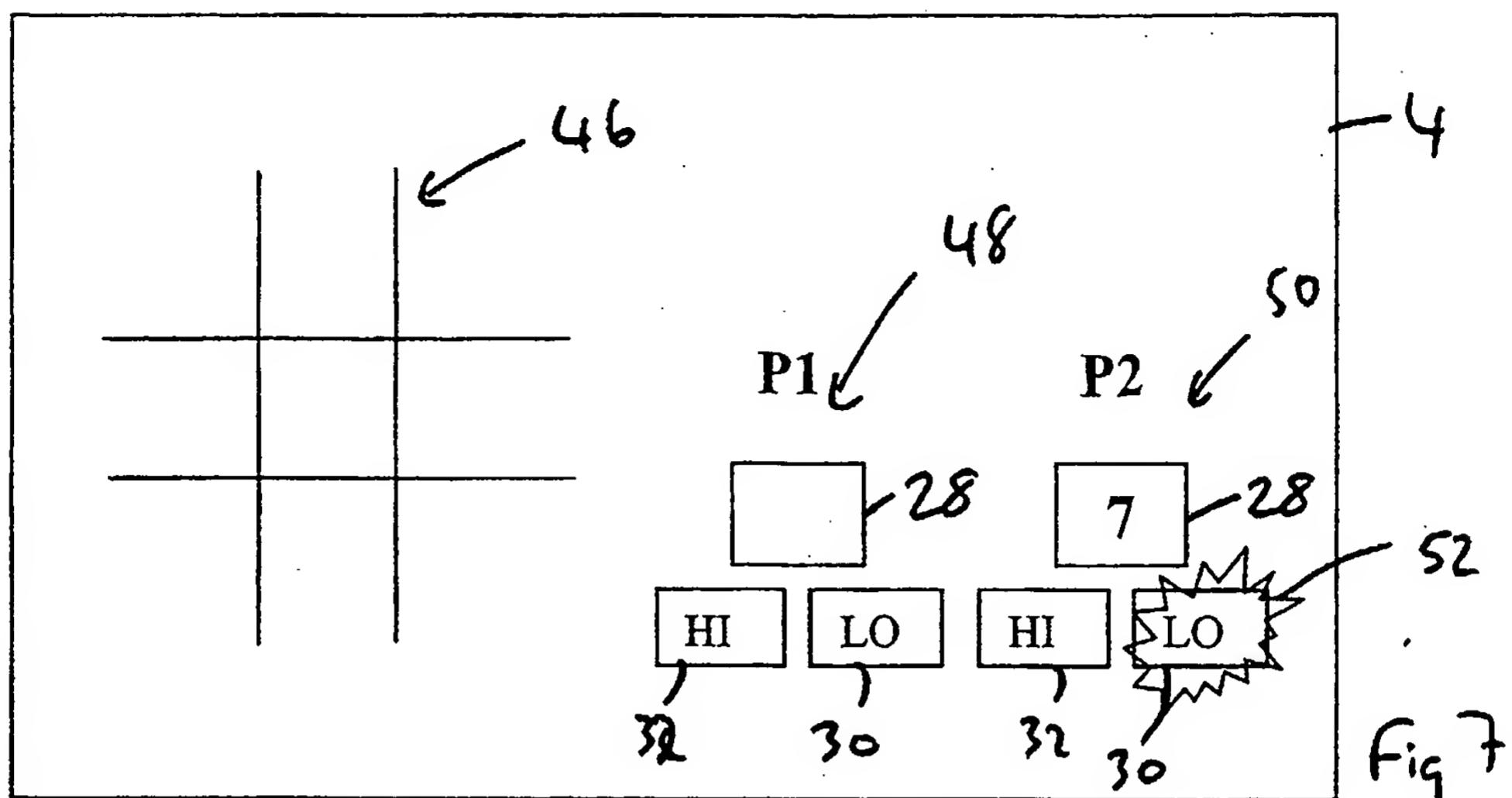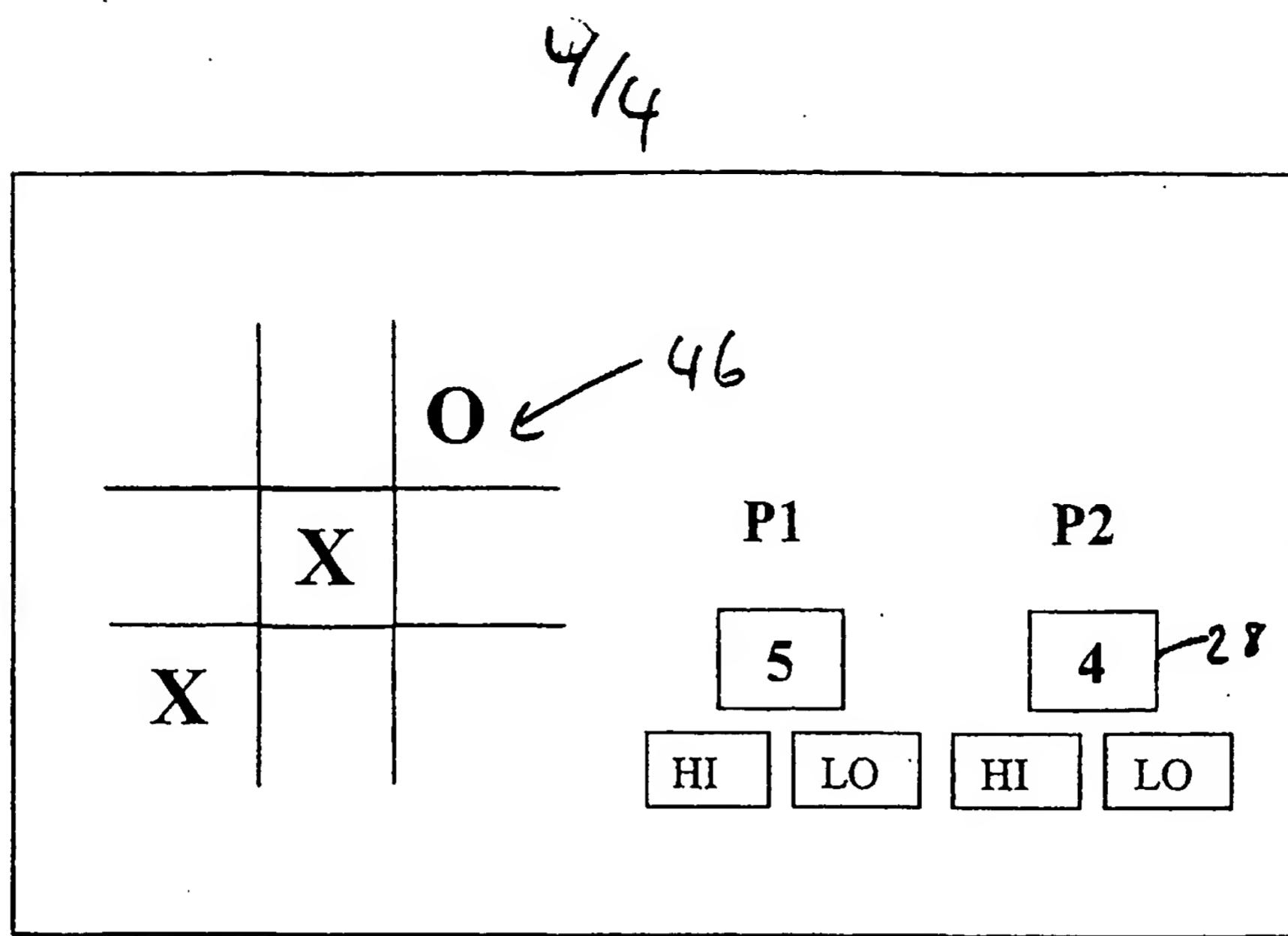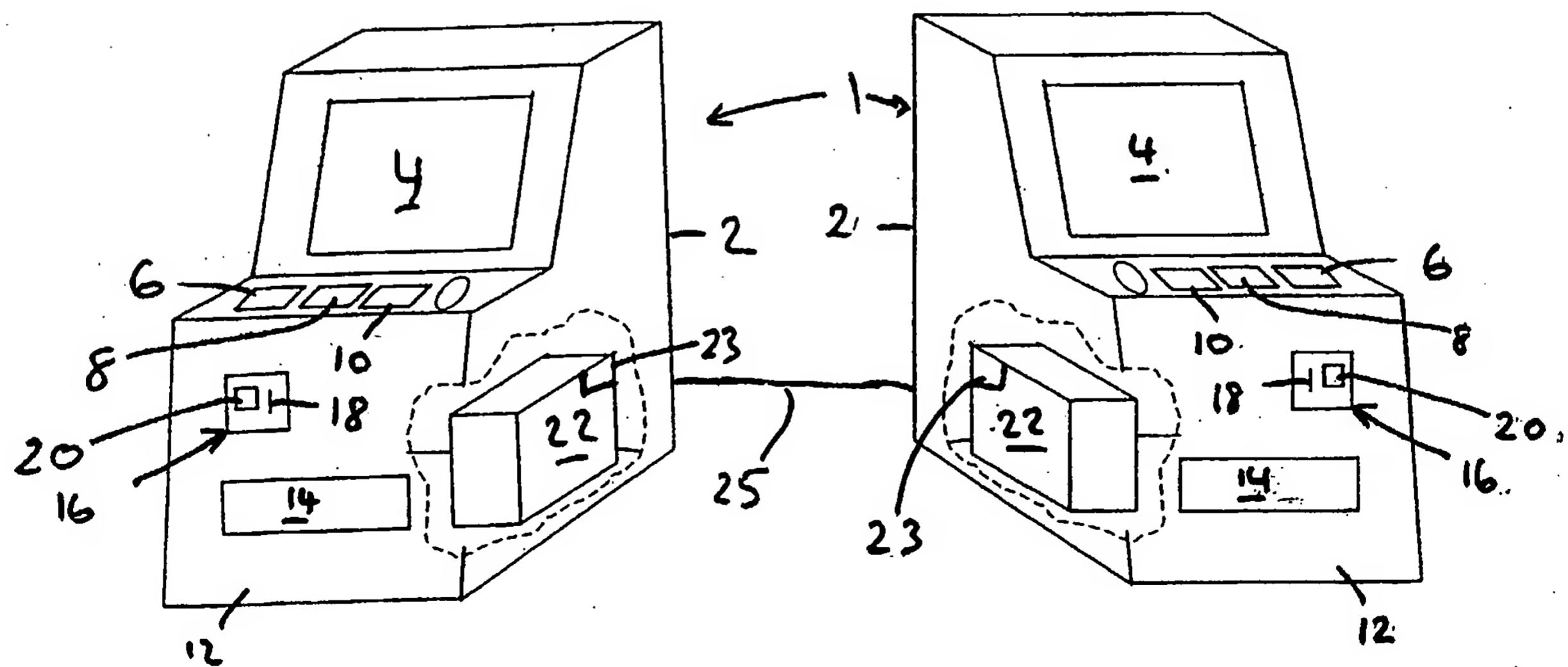
Fig 11

AN ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE

This invention relates to an entertainment machine for playing games and, in particular, but not exclusively, to machines that require coins, tokens, credit or credit-cards to play.

The field of coin, token, credit, or credit card operated amusement and gaming machines, which are released for play by the introduction of one or more credits, is well developed. The outcome of a game can result in a win and the subsequent awarding of a prize in relation to the initial game credit staked by the player.

Entertainment machines can be arranged to provide games that have an apparently random outcome, i.e. are not influenced by the skill of the player. Alternatively the machine can be arranged to provide games that have a skill element and do rely on the skill of the player.

In the majority of countries entertainment machines are governed by legislation that controls the amount of prizes that a machine must return relative to the income taken by the machine. If the machine is providing a game that relies on the skill of the player it can be a problem to meet the requirements laid down by legislation regarding the prizes paid out by the machine, since the prizes are determined by the skill of the player. Therefore, on such machines a highly skilled player may be able to cause the machine to make a high pay-out, whereas a player having a lower skill may not be able to win a prize at all.

It may therefore, not be desirable to provide games, which have an outcome determined by the skill of the player. This can prevent a number of well-known games, which may be popular with players, being

provided. This includes games such as connect4, othello, noughts and crosses, many card games requiring skill, Chinese checkers, boxes, patience (card game), draughts (or checkers), chess, pairs.

5   The games mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be referred to as games of strategy, which rely on the tactical ability of a player rather than their hand eye co-ordination, dexterity, etc. The skilled person will appreciate the nature of such games.

10   Further, a game of strategy may also be defined as a game in which play follows a set of predetermined rules, such that once play has commenced play follows these rules without a random element determining the flow of play. That is the games rely on players making a response to the state of the game within the constraints of the rules. Traditionally, a random
15   element is an occurrence such as a dice roll, etc.

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide an entertainment machine that helps to overcome the problems discussed.

20   According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided an entertainment machine arranged to be played by at least one user and to provide a game of strategy in which a user makes at least one move, the machine comprising a display, processing circuitry arranged to provide the game and display it on said display, and at least one user operable
25   input to the processing circuitry, wherein the processing circuitry is arranged to enter a selection routine before a user can make a move in predetermined situations in the game.

An advantage of such a machine is that it can be used, via the selection
30   routine, to introduce a degree of control of the game allowing the machine to meet the required legislation.

Preferably, the strategy game that is provided by the processing circuitry requires a plurality of players. A list of games that the applicant considers to be strategy games are as follows: connect4, othello, noughts and crosses, many card games requiring skill, Chinese checkers, boxes, patience (card game), draughts (or checkers), chess, pairs. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and there are likely to be many more strategy games. The list is however intended to illustrate the nature of the phrase strategy game within the meaning of this document. It will be appreciated that the majority of the strategy games mentioned in the preceding list are intended to be played by a plurality of players (with the exception of the patience card game).

The terms "player" and "user" have been used in this specification and are intended to have the following meanings: "User" is intended to mean a person playing a game provided by the machine, whereas "player" is intended to mean a theoretical person that is required for a particular game to be played.

Preferably the processing circuitry is capable of playing the game on behalf of one or more of the players. Such an arrangement is convenient because it allows a single user to play the machine with the processing circuitry playing the roles of the remaining players.

Alternatively, or additionally, the processing circuitry may be arranged such that a user playing the machine can play the role of more than one player in the strategy game. Indeed, the processing circuitry may be arranged such that a user playing the machine can play the role of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more players in the strategy game.

In one embodiment the processing circuitry is arranged such that a user playing the machine can play all of the player roles required by the machine. The processing circuitry may be arranged to require the user to play both roles in a game for two players (for example noughts and crosses).

Alternatively, or additionally, the processing circuitry may be arranged to take inputs from more than one user and so allow a plurality of users to play a game on the machine. In such circumstances, the processing circuitry may or may not be arranged to play the game on behalf of one or more players. For example the processing circuitry may be arranged to take inputs from two users and play the role of a third player therefore providing a three-player game. Alternatively, the processing circuitry may be arranged to take inputs from two users and not take a role itself, thus providing a two-player game.

If the processing circuitry is arranged to take inputs from more than one user it may be arranged to require each user to take turns in making their input.

The machine may be arranged to indicate which user is required to make an input. In order to provide such indication the machine may be arranged to cause a light to flash, to display an indication on the display, to make an announcement to the players via a speaker, or any other suitable way of providing instruction.

The predetermined situations in which the processing circuitry is arranged to use the selection routine may be any one, or any combination of the following situations: before each and every move made by a particular user; before a move in which a prize can be won by a user; before moves

when the pay-out ratio of the machine is incorrect, before moves on a randomly, or pseudo randomly, determined basis.

Preferably, the processing circuitry is arranged such that the output of the selection routine appears to be under the control of a user's skill. Such an arrangement is advantageous because it makes the user believe that they are controlling the output of the game and may therefore, make the user more willing to play the machine.

In one embodiment of the machine a high low gamble arrangement is provided and arranged such that the outcome of the gamble allows the selection routine to determine the next move in the game. A high low gamble arrangement is advantageous since it is well known to the users of entertainment machines and is therefore likely to be accepted.

For the avoidance of doubt, a high low gamble arrangement displays at least one symbol, from a series, to a user. The user must then guess whether the next symbol displayed by the arrangement will be higher or lower than that currently displayed. An input is provided so that a user can make an entry to the arrangement. If the user guesses correctly then he/she wins the gamble, if he/she guesses incorrectly then they lose the gamble. The symbol is commonly a number, a representation of a dice, or a representation of a playing card.

More than one high low gamble arrangement may be provided. This is advantageous in situations in which there a game provided by the machine is designed to be played by more than one user.

In other embodiments an arrangement may be provided that simulates the roll of at least one die. The selection routine may allow the user to guess the outcome according to the roll. If the user guesses correctly then

he/she may win the guess, and if he/she guesses incorrectly then he/she may lose the guess.

Further, an arrangement may be provided that requires a user to make an input to the machine when an indicator is at a predetermined position. For example the indicator may be a bar of varying length, or may be a series of flashing lights, or the like.

Indeed, an arrangement may be provided that simulates, or provides, any situation in which a user is perceived to be able to use his/her skill in order to determine the outcome. If the user believes that they can use his/her skill in order to determine the next move (for example by winning a high/low gamble) then he/she may be more willing to play. It will be appreciated by the skilled person that the outcome of such gambles can in reality be under the control of the processing circuitry. Therefore, the processing circuitry can control whether or not a user wins a game, and consequently, the machine can meet the pay-out ratios that it is required to meet by legislation.

The selection routine providing arrangement may be arranged such that the outcome of the selection routine determines which player's counter is added to the game in progress. In one embodiment the symbols provided by the selection routine are provided in a plurality of colours, and the colour of the next symbol determines the counter that will be next added to the game. For example in a game requiring a first and a second player the symbols of the selection routine may be provided in two colours such that counters added to the game can be of the first or second player.

The processing circuitry may be arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is in favour of a user then any, or any combination, of the following situations may occur: a counter is added to the game that

belongs to the player being played by the user; the user can decide the move that is to be made (for example the user may be able to decide the position at which a counter, or piece, is added to the game).

5 Further, the processing circuitry may be arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is not in favour of a user then any, or any combination, of the following situations may occur: a counter is added to the game that belongs to a player other than the player being played by the user; a random move is made on behalf of the player (for

10 example a piece, or counter, is added at a random position to the game); the game terminates; or the player loses one or more lives.

The user operable input may be a switch, roller ball, joystick, or other manual input means, or may be a region of a touch sensitive display.

15

The machine may be provided with a connection means allowing it to be connected to external devices. Such connection may be a physical connection, or may be data connection allowing data to be transferred therebetween. The external devices may be other similar machines, or

20 indeed may be any other device capable of communicating with the machine.

If such a connection means is provided the processing circuitry may be arranged to play the game provided by the machine across the connection.

25 For example, the machine may provide a multi-player game with users at different machines providing the part of a player.

The connection means may allow the machine to connect to a network. The network may be any one or more of the following: a

30 telecommunication network, a Local Area Network LAN, a Wide Area

Network WAN, a wireless network, or the like. For example, the connection means may be a MODEM, a network adapter, or the like.

According to a second aspect of the invention there is provided a method
5 of controlling an entertainment machine providing a strategy game comprising providing a user with a selection routine allowing them to determine the next move in the game according to the outcome of the selection routine, the selection routine requiring the user to predict the outcome of an event.

10

An advantage of such a method is that it can help the machine tailor its pay-out to meet that required by legislation, since the machine can control the outcome of the event of which the user is predicting the outcome.

15 In one embodiment the user may be required to predict the outcome of a high low gamble. In other embodiments the user may be required to predict the outcome of the roll of at least one dice. In yet a further embodiment the user may be required to make an input to the processing circuitry when a varying indicator is at one or more predetermined
20 positions. In yet further embodiments a reel may be provided wherein a user must guess where the reel will stop once spun, or where a ball will stop on the reel (e.g. a roulette wheel). Further, a user may be required to guess the outcome of the toss of a coin.

25 The outcome of the selection routine may be used to determine whether the user, or an opponent of the user, has the next move. The skilled person will appreciate that this may mean any one user in the game may have more than one move in a row. If a user loses a selection routine then the next counter added to the game may belong to a player other than that
30 being played by the user.

Alternatively, or additionally, the outcome of the selection routine may be used to determine the move that the user makes. For example the position at which his/her counter is added to a grid may be determined by the outcome of the selection routine. If a user loses the selection routine

5   then a move may be made randomly on his/her behalf.

The method may comprise causing the entertainment machine to play the part of one of the players required to play the game.

10   The method may comprise using the selection routine to determine the next move that entertainment machine makes on behalf of the players for which it is playing. Using the selection routine in this manner may provide any users using the machine with a feeling of equality, and thus make them more likely to use the machine.

15

According to a third aspect of the invention there is provided two or more entertainment machines, each arranged to be played by at least one user and to provide a game of strategy in which a user make at least one move, each machine comprising a display, processing circuitry arranged to

20   provide the game and display it on said display, at least one user operable input to the processing circuitry, wherein the processing circuitry is arranged to enter a selection routine before a user can make a move in predetermined situations in the game and a connection means arranged to connect the machine to at least one other machine.

25

The connection means may provide a physical connection or may provide a connection that is capable of transmitting data between the machines.

Each machine may be arranged to provide a game which allows a first

30   user at a first one of the machines to play a second user at a second one of the machines with each user playing the part of a player in the game.

According to a fourth aspect of the invention there is provided a computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions for causing processing circuitry to execute the method of the second aspect of the invention.

According to a fifth aspect of the invention there is provided a propagated signal arranged to program a processing circuitry to execute the method of the second aspect of the invention.

Such a propagated signal may be used to program an entertainment machine having the processing circuitry therein via a telephone line, or other data transmitting medium.

There now follows by way of example only a detailed description of the present invention with reference to the accompanying Figures of which:

Figure 1 shows an entertainment machine according to the present invention;

Figures 2 to 6 show schematic representations of screen shots of one embodiment of a machine according to the invention;

Figures 7 to 10 show schematic representations of screen shots of a further embodiment of a machine according to the invention; and

Figure 11 shows a network of two entertainment machines according to the present invention.

The entertainment machine 1 of Figure 1 comprises a cabinet 2 having at top region thereof a display 4 (comprising in this case a CRT screen)

arranged to display a game. At a convenient user operable height are a range of manual switches 6, 8, 10 providing user operable inputs, which a user can operate to control the action of the machine 1. On a front face 12 of the machine are provided a pay-out slot 14 to return winnings

5   that a user wins. Further, there is a coin input mechanism 16 as is well known in the art, having a coin input slot 18 and coin return button 20.

The entertainment machine further comprises processing circuitry 22 which includes a micro-processor, or controller or the like, together with

10   an associated memory arranged to provide the game, and control the display screen 4 in order to display the game to the user. The manual switches 6, 8, 10 provide inputs to the processing circuitry allowing the user to control the game being played on the machine 1.

15   In this embodiment the display 4 is touch sensitive and a user can provide inputs to the processing circuitry 22 by touching the screen as well as by using the manually operated switches 6, 8, 10.

Figures 2 to 6 show a representation of a machine arranged to provide a

20   simulation of the popular connect 4 game, in which at least two users take it in turns to add counters of different to a grid in an attempt to make a line of four counters of the same colour. In a physical (manual) embodiment of the game the grid is arranged vertically such that gravity causes the counters to fall so that the grid fills from the bottom to the top.

25

Therefore, as shown in Figure 2 the display 4 shows a simulation of a connect 4 board 24, which in this embodiment comprises a 6x8 grid. Also shown on the screen is a high low gamble arrangement 26. The high low gamble arrangement comprises a symbol display 28, a low input

30   region 30 and a high input region 32. The high low gamble

arrangement 26 is used to provide a selection routine that allows the next move in the game to be determined.

The game shown in Figures 2 to 6 is a game being played by a single user of the machine, with the other player being provided by the processing circuitry 22 of the machine 1. In the Figures the counters of the machine are striped, and the counters of the user are coloured black.

In use, the high low gamble arrangement is arranged to display a symbol in the symbol display 28. In this embodiment the symbol display can be any one of the numbers between 1 and 10 inclusive. In the screen shot of Figure 2 the symbol display 28 shows the numeral 5. In order to play the game a user must guess whether the next symbol to be displayed in the symbol display 28 will be higher or lower than that presently displayed. The user touches the display 4 on the low input region 30 or the high input region 32 to enter his/her guess to the processing circuitry.

If the user guesses correctly then the next counter added to the grid 24 will be coloured in the user's colour, and if the user guesses incorrectly the next counter added to the grid 24 will be coloured in the machine's colour.

As represented by the star 34 around the high input region 32 the user has guessed in this embodiment that the next symbol will be higher than the 5 shown in the symbol display 28. However, as can be seen by the screen shot of Figure 3 the next symbol displayed in the symbol display 28 is in fact a 3; lower than the 5 originally displayed. Therefore, the user guessed incorrectly and the counter 36 added to the grid 24 is striped (i.e. belonging to the machine 1). The processing circuitry 22 of the machine 1 has determined in which column of the grid the counter should be added.

Next the processing circuitry plays a move and adds a further counter 38 in its own, striped, colour (as shown in Figure 4). (Although not shown it would be possible for the machine to use the selection routine before

5 making its move - if the machine lost the selection routine then the next counter added to the grid would be that of the user).

The user is then asked to guess whether the next symbol displayed in the symbol display 28 is higher or lower than that already displayed. As

10 represented by the star 40 around the high input region 32, the user is shown as having guessed that the next symbol to be displayed is higher than that already displayed.

As can be seen in Figure 5 the next symbol to be displayed is a 7 and

15 therefore, the user has made a correct guess. As a result of the correct guess a counter 42 coloured black (the user's colour) is added to the grid 24.

In this embodiment before the user's counter is added to the grid 24 the

20 user must touch the display 4 at the column in which he/she would like the counter to be added. In other embodiments the processing circuitry 22 may determine in which column the user's counter should be added, and thus not require any user input as to in which column the counter should be added. When a striped counter is added to the grid 24

25 no input is required since this counter belongs to the machine 1.

This process continues until either the machine 1 or the user obtain a row of four symbols. This situation is represented in Figure 6 in which the machine 1 has obtained a diagonal row of striped symbols, as indicated by

30 the line 44. The machine has thus won this particular game. Although

this embodiment requires a line of four symbols to be obtained, any number of symbols in a line may be required to obtain a win.

Figures 7 to 10 show a second embodiment of the game in which the machine provides a game of noughts and crosses arranged for two users to play.

The screen shot as shown in Figure 7 shows a noughts and crosses grid 46 together with a first and a second high low gamble arrangement 48, 50, each comprising a symbol display 28, a high input region 32 and a low input region 30. The first high low gamble arrangement 48 is provided for the first user and the second high low gamble arrangement 50 is provided for the second user. (In other embodiments a single high low gamble arrangement may be provided that the two users share).

By some mechanism (not discussed) it has been decided that the second user should have the first move. Therefore, a symbol (the numeral 7) has been displayed in the symbol display 28 of the second high low gamble arrangement 50. As represented by the star 52 around the low input region 30 of the second high low gamble arrangement 50 player two guesses that the next symbol will be lower than the 7 presently displayed by touching the display 4 on the low input region 30.

As shown in Figure 8 the next symbol to be displayed is in fact the numeral 8, and therefore, user two has incorrectly guessed the next symbol. In consequence user one can add a symbol of their own, an "X", to the grid 46. User one selects the area of the grid at which they wish the symbol to be added by touching the display 4 at a corresponding region. In the example shown in Figure 8 user one has touched the central region of the grid 46 and thus the "X" symbol has been added to the central region of the grid.

Once user two has had an opportunity to guess the next symbol, and a symbol has been added to the grid 46, user one is given an opportunity to guess the next symbol. As can be seen from Figure 8 the numeral one

5   has been displayed in the symbol display 28 of the first high low gamble arrangement 48. As indicated by star 54 around the high input region 32 of the first arrangement 48 the first user has guessed that the next symbol displayed will be higher than the one.

10   As shown in Figure 9 the first user has guessed correctly, since a five is now displayed in the symbol display 28. The first user is therefore given an opportunity to add one of his/her symbols to the grid 46. The first user has elected to add his/her "X" to the bottom left corner of the grid. It will be appreciated that there are now two symbols of the same kind present on the grid despite both players having a go at guessing the next

15   symbol.

This routine of alternate guessing of the next symbol by each of the users continues until there is a winner, i.e. one of the users obtains a line of

20   three of his/her symbols in a row. As can be seen from Figures 9 and 10 the next move in this particular game is for the second user to guess that the next symbol will be lower than the 8 provided after his/her first guess. The second user is indeed correct in this guess (a four is displayed in the symbol display 28 as can be seen in Figure 10). As a result of the

25   correct guess the user player can add one of his/her symbols (a nought) to the grid 46.

In this instance the second player has elected to add the nought in the top right corner of the grid in order to prevent the first user from obtaining a

30   line of three symbols.

Although in this embodiment the users have been able to select just where added to the grid 46 is placed (by touching the display 4) it would be equally possible for the processing circuitry 22 to determine just where the next symbol should be placed. Or indeed other input means such as

5   the manual switches 6, 8, 10 could be used to specify the placing.

In a further embodiment (not illustrated) the processing circuitry is arranged to provide a two player noughts and crosses game that a single user can play and plays the part of both players. In this embodiment a

10   high low gamble arrangement provides the selection routine. The high low gamble arrangement is provided with the numbers between 1 and 12 alternatively coloured in red and green. That is the sequence is arranged as follows: red 1, green 2, red 3, green 4, red 5, green 6, etc.

15   The red numbers are associated with noughts and the green numbers are associated with crosses.

In use the colour of the number displayed determines the symbol that is next added to the board. For example if the symbol displayed is a 6, the

20   user may guess that the next symbol to be displayed is lower than this (a low gamble). The machine may for example display a red 1 on the high low gamble arrangement, so that the player wins the gamble. Therefore, the next symbol added to the board is a nought (since the player has won the gamble).

25

However, if the next number displayed by the high low gamble was in fact higher than the green 6, for example a red 7, the player has got the gamble wrong. In this scenario the next symbol added to the board would be a cross since the player had lost the gamble.

30

The skilled person will appreciate that there are other ways of allowing a single user to play both roles of a two-player game. For example two high low gamble arrangements may be provided, one associated with each of the players in the game.

5

The invention may comprise providing a machine arranged to provide any one of the games mentioned herewith, and providing an arrangement to provide a selection routine, the outcome of which can be used to determine the next move in the game.

10

Figure 11 shows two entertainment machines as described above networked together. Each machine further comprises a connection means 23 (in this case provided as a portion of the processing circuitry 22) that allows the machines to be connected together via a

15 connection 25. The machines are arranged such that each provides a two player game and further such that a user of one machine play the part of one player and the usr of the other machine plays the part of the other player. Communications are passed across the connection 25 to allow each machine to display the moves of both players. As described above,

20 the machines require a selection routine to be used for predetermined moves in the game.

CLAIMS

1. An entertainment machine arranged to be played by at least one user and to provide a game of strategy in which the user makes at least one move, the machine comprising a display, processing circuitry arranged to provide the game and display it on said display, and at least one user operable input to the processing circuitry, wherein the processing circuitry is arranged to enter a selection routine before a user can make a move in predetermined situations in the game.

2. The entertainment machine of Claim 1 which comprises a high low gamble (HI/LO) gamble arrangement and arranged such that the outcome of a gamble thereon allows the selection routine to determine the next move in the game.

3. The entertainment machine of Claim 2 in which a plurality of HI/LO gamble arrangements are provided.

4. The entertainment machine of Claim 1 or 2 which comprises a mechanism that simulates the roll of at least one dice and in which the selection routine allows the user to guess the outcome of one or more dice rolls of the or each dice

5. The entertainment machine of any preceding Claim which is arranged such that the outcome of the selection routine determines which player's counter is added to the game in progress.

6. The entertainment machine of any preceding Claim in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is in favour of the user then a counter, or other piece, is added to the game that belongs to the player being played by the user.

7. The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 5 in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is in favour of the user then the user can decide the move that is to be made.

8. The entertainment machine of any preceding Claim in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is not in favour of the user then a counter, or other piece, is added to the game that belongs to a player other than that player being controlled by the user.

9. The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 7 in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is not in favour of the user then a random move is made on behalf of the player.

10. The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 7 in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is not in favour of the user then the game terminates.

11. The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 7 in which the processing circuitry is arranged such that if the outcome of the selection routine is not in favour of the user then the player played by the user loses one or more lives.

12. The entertainment machine of any of the preceding Claims in which the game provided requires a plurality of players.

13.	The entertainment machine of any preceding Claim in which the processing circuitry is capable of playing the game on behalf of one or more players.

5	14.	The entertainment machine of Claim 12 or 13 in which a user playing the machine can play the role of more than one player in the game.

15.	The entertainment machine of any preceding Claim in which the
10	processing circuitry is arranged to take inputs from more than one user and so allow a plurality of users to play a game on the machine.

16.	The entertainment machine of Claim 15 in which the machine is arranged to indicate which user is required to make an input.

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17.	The entertainment machine of any of the preceding Claims in which the processing circuitry is arranged to use the selection routine before each move made by a particular user.

20	18.	The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 16 in which the processing circuitry is arranged to use the selection routine before a move in which a prize can be won by a user.

19.	The entertainment machine of any of Claims 1 to 16 in which the
25	processing circuitry is arranged to use the selection routine before moves which are made when the ratio of credits paid into the machine by users thereof to credits paid out of the machine does not match predetermined criteria.

20. The entertainment machine of any Claims 1 to 16 in which the processing circuitry is arranged to use the selection routine before moves on a randomly, or pseudo randomly, determined basis.

5   21. The entertainment machine of any of the preceding Claims which is arranged such that the output of the selection routine appears to be under the control of a user's skill.

22. The entertainment machine of any of the preceding claims that is 10   provided with a connection means allowing it to be connected to external devices.

23. The entertainment machine of claim 22 in which the processing circuitry is arranged to play the game provided by the machine across the 15   connection provided by the connection means.

24. A network of two or more entertainment machines with each being arranged to be played by at least one user and to provide a game of strategy in which a user make at least one move, each machine 20   comprising a display, processing circuitry arranged to provide the game and display it on said display, at least one user operable input to the processing circuitry, wherein the processing circuitry is arranged to enter a selection routine before a user can make a move in predetermined situations in the game and a connection means arranged to connect the 25   machine to at least one other machine.

25. A network according to claim 24 in which each machine is arranged to provide a game which allows a first user at a first one of the machines to play a second user at a second one of the machines with each 30   user playing the part of a player in the game.

26. A method of controlling an entertainment machine providing a strategy game comprising providing a user with a selection routine allowing or appearing to allow them to determine the next move in the game according to the outcome of the selection routine, the selection routine requiring the user to predict the outcome of an event.

27. The method of Claim 26 in which the entertainment machine is caused to play the part of one of the players required to play the game.

28. The method of Claim 27 in which the selection routine is used to determine the next move that the entertainment machine makes on behalf of the players for which it is playing.

29. The method of any of Claims 26 to 28 in which the selection routine requires a user to predict the outcome of a HI/LO gamble.

30. The method of any of Claims 26 to 28 in which the selection routine requires a user to predict the outcome of the roll of at least one dice.

31. The method of any of Claims 26 to 28 in which the selection routine requires a user to make an input to the processing circuitry when a varying indicator is at one or more predetermined positions.

32. The method of any of Claims 26 to 28 in which the selection routine requires a user to predict the where a reel, or a reel simulation, will stop having been spun.

33. The method of any one of Claims 26 to 32 in which the outcome of the selection routine is used to determine whether the user, or an opponent of the user, has the next move.

34.   The method of any one of Claims 26 to 33 in which the outcome of the selection routine is used to determine the move that the user makes.

5   35.   A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions for causing processing circuitry to execute the method of any of Claims 26 to 34.

36.   A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions for
10   causing an entertainment machine to function as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 25.

37.   A propagated signal arranged to program a processing circuitry to execute the method of any of Claims 26 to 34.
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38.   An entertainment machine substantially as described herein within with reference to the accompanying drawings.

39.   A method of controlling an entertainment machine substantially as
20   described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.T): G4V (VAA)

Int Cl (Ed.7): A63F: G07F (17/32, 17/34)

Other: Online: EPODOC, JAPIO, WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage		Relevant to claims
X	GB 2 338 578 A	(BILGREY) an amusement apparatus which allows a game of skill to be played if a game of chance is won	at least 1, 7, 24, 26
X	GB 2 320 206 A	(SHOWCASE) an amusement apparatus which allows a game of skill to be played if a game of chance is won	at least 1, 7, 24, 26
X	GB 2 313 790 A	(SHOWCASE) an amusement apparatus which allows a game of skill to be played if a game of chance is won	at least 1, 7, 24, 26
A	GB 2 305 531 A	(DAVID) an example of a fruit machine having HI/LO type game	
X	GB 2 292 246 A	(ECLIPSE) an amusement apparatus which allows a game of skill to be played if a game of chance is won	at least 1, 7, 24, 26
X	GB 2 072 395 A	(KENNEDY) an amusement apparatus which allows a video game to be played if a game of chance is won	at least 1, 7, 24, 26

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.